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11 September 1963
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UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

MEMORANDUM FOR THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

1. Attached is a copy of the memorandum on the subject in the form approved by USIB at its meeting today.
2. As agreed at that meeting two copies of this document are being furnished to the White House and to each USIB member.

Executive Secretary ✓

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Attachment

Distribution: See attached sheet.

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11 September 1963

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE US INTELLIGENCE BOARD

SUBJECT: Evaluation of Reports on the Presence of Weapons of Mass Destruction in Cuba

1. The full range of intelligence reporting

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no verifiable information of the presence in Cuba of nuclear warheads, strategic missiles, military-related radioactive materials, biological weapons, or lethal chemical weapons.

2. There is no acceptable evidence that the Soviets plan to introduce such weapons into Cuba or that the Soviets or Cubans intend to develop such weapons on the island. On the contrary, the progress made by the Soviets in training the Cuban armed forces, the continuing withdrawal of Soviet military personnel, and the thrust of present Soviet policy vis-a-vis the United States all make it highly unlikely that the Soviets would place weapons of mass destruction at the disposal of Castro and the Cuban Government. Our best evidence indicates that the Soviets have never relinquished control over any such weapons.

3. Nuclear warheads and delivery systems: There is no reliable evidence of the presence of nuclear warheads in Cuba. Nuclear warhead storage facilities at the strategic missile sites were never completed. However, we continue to receive reports that such warheads are or may be in Cuba,

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[Redacted]

weapon systems that remain. Cubans are currently being trained in most of these weapons systems and have already assumed control of some of them.

4. Certain weapon systems on the island have a dual capability, limited in both range and payload, for delivering either a conventional or a nuclear warhead. They are primarily intended for use as short-range tactical weapons, however, and are not dependent upon nuclear warheads for effective use in this role.

5. We continue to receive reports of the presence of strategic missiles in Cuba capable of delivering a nuclear warhead. Most of these reports can be related to known missile facilities or activities, many are patently false or constitute exaggerated reports of known non-missile activity. To be sure, there are some half dozen reports within the last few months on which we must suspend judgment because they cannot be reconciled with available information. Although these reports appear to point to suspect activities we are inclined to consider them doubtful. Attempts to acquire additional information on all such reports have so far produced no verifiable evidence that strategic missiles either were retained in Cuba or have been reintroduced since their removal.

6. Radioactive materials: One of the three known shipments of radioactive materials to Cuba was associated with oil prospecting. The other two were almost certainly associated with medical treatment or research. There is no evidence that they were in any way connected with nuclear weapons. Shipments of lead have also given rise to rumors of the delivery or presence of nuclear weapons. However, these shipments are known to have been related to Cuban production of storage batteries, shielding for medical facilities, and nickel refining.



8. Biological warfare: Several recent reports have indicated that the Cuban Government is involved in the development and production of biological agents for possible dissemination within the US. Most of these reports have concerned the utilization of Foot and Mouth Disease (Aftosa) for anti-animal BW purposes. Cattle in Cuba apparently are infected with this disease (but not with the far more dangerous Rinderpest as reported in the press) and the Cubans are probably attempting to take some preventive measures, possibly involving the development and production of a Foot and Mouth Disease vaccine. Their efforts to this end may lie behind the reports we have received.

9. At the present time, the Cubans do not possess the capability for the research and production necessary to develop a Foot and Mouth Disease weapon system for large scale dissemination. Even if this capability were to be provided by the Soviets, the likelihood of dissemination on this scale would be extremely remote. Cuba does have a capability to introduce Foot and Mouth Disease clandestinely into the United States, or with less difficulty, into uninfected parts of Latin America. A successful

clandestine attack could not be traced to its origin with certainty and might result in considerable economic harassment in the United States, but could probably be effectively controlled. We believe that the Cuban Government possesses neither an anti-human BW capability nor the technique and resources to develop one.

10. Chemical warfare agents: Several reports have been received concerning the use of chemical agents by Cuban Army forces. These reports usually describe the CW agent as either tear gas or a mixture of gasoline and sulphur. The latter would be an inexpensive and easily obtainable substitute for tear gas. These and possibly other non-lethal CW agents appear to be used to drive anti-Castro elements out of caves and other hiding places. Although not considered lethal, either agent could produce burns and cause the hospitalization of military personnel as described in some of these reports.

11. We believe that Cuba does not now have the capability to develop and produce lethal CW agents. Furthermore, it is unlikely that the Soviets would supply the Cubans with lethal CW munitions. There appears to be little opportunity for their safe and effective operational employment in Cuba. In any event, the Cuban armed forces apparently have not received either the protective equipment or the extensive training in handling, storage, and tactical use that such munitions would require.

Approved For Release 2007/2008 : CAFE-BIN-0097R000800100004-9

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